

**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL THOMAS E. PEREZ AT THE
CLEVELAND POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**

CLEVELAND

Good morning and I would like to thank you for joining us for this announcement. I would especially like to thank Mayor Jackson, Chief McGrath, and Public Safety Director Flask for being with us this morning.

Last year the Department of Justice, together with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio, began a preliminary review of the Cleveland Division of Police to determine if a full investigation into their policies and practices on their use of force is necessary. After careful consideration of the information gathered during our review, we have determined that a full civil rights investigation is in fact warranted. The investigation will focus on use of force issues and will examine allegations that Cleveland police officers use excessive force. In the course of the investigation, we will examine the adequacy of the police department's policies, procedures, training, supervision, and accountability mechanisms, all of which are essential to effective, constitutional policing. In addition, we will review the police department's engagement with the community and will be interacting with officers in the field.

We can assure the city and the community that we will be as transparent as possible and that we will work with you as we move forward with our inquiry. We are not investigating based upon any one specific group, person or event. We initiated our investigation only after a careful, considered review process that spanned police activity during the past several years. Our investigation into CPD's use of force practices will be thorough, fair and independent. We will follow the facts, wherever the facts. We will peel the onion to its core, and leave no stone unturned.

During our investigation, we will gather as much information from as many sources as possible. Accordingly, we will be reaching out to community members and groups for help in identifying potential problems within the police department. We will be assisted by seasoned police professionals, many of whom are retired or current police

chiefs with extensive experience in contemporary policing standards. We will talk to department leadership and rank and file officers. In other jurisdictions, we have done ride-alongs with officers to get firsthand understanding of the challenges confronting officers. We will review cases individually and cumulatively to determine whether there are any patterns or trends.

We do not prejudge our investigations - rather we gather all available facts to determine, thoroughly and objectively, whether systemic violations have occurred. Our goal with this investigation - as with all of our police pattern or practice investigations - is straightforward: to determine the truth, and to work together with the City of Cleveland and its police department to help ensure that its officers are best serving the individuals they are sworn to protect. Mayor Jackson, Chief McGrath, and Public Safety Director Flask have pledged to fully cooperate with our review. We also look forward to working with community advocates and hearing from residents across the city. Public safety, community confidence, and constitutional policing go hand-in-hand, and our experience has shown that when we have cooperation and engagement from a city, its police department, and the community we can conduct our investigation in a more efficient and effective manner. If we determine that a pattern or practice of excessive force exists, then together with the city and community, we will develop a comprehensive plan for sustainable reform.

We will not wait until the end of our investigation to offer technical assistance or other recommendations to address concerns that we identify. During the course of our investigations elsewhere we have frequently provided real time feedback that has enabled police departments to implement critical reforms in an expedited fashion. To that end, we expect to remain in regular contact with Police Department leadership over the next several months regarding our findings.

Let me be clear: this is a civil investigation, not a criminal investigation. We are focused on CPD as a whole, not individual officers. We are looking at systems issues, and not particular culpability of specific individuals. We are focused on whether there is a pattern or practice of excessive force by the CPD, and if there is, we will work to see that this issue is alleviated in the future.

In 1994, in the aftermath of the civil rights unrest in Los Angeles following the state verdict in the Rodney King case, Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, a key civil rights law giving the Justice Department the authority to combat systemic violations of the Constitution or laws of the United States by police departments. The Justice Department, partnering with U.S. Attorneys offices around the country, has used this critical civil rights law to work collaboratively and effectively with numerous police departments and communities. As a result of this work, the Justice Department has obtained effective reforms that have benefitted millions of community members nationwide. During the tenure of Attorney General Holder, the department has handled more police reform cases under the 1994 law than at any other point in the nearly two decade history of the law. Increasingly, police departments and local elected officials are reaching out to the department for assistance in ensuring effective constitutional policing.

The road ahead will be difficult. This work is not easy, but this independent review is critical to ensuring and preserving trust between a police department and the community it serves.

In the months ahead, we intend to do a considerable amount of listening and learning. We will listen and learn from CPD. To all of the men and women of the Cleveland Division of Police, we look forward to hearing your thoughts and suggestions, to riding along with you so that we can step in your shoes as best as possible. We have the greatest respect for the hard job that you have, and our role is to identify potential tools that will make your job safer and more rewarding, and will help you reduce crime while ensuring respect for the Constitution.

To the community, we will continue to seek out and hear your thoughts on what is working in CPD in your opinion, and what needs to be remedied. We are hopeful and confident that everyone with an interest in this matter will approach the months ahead with a constructive spirit, mindful that we all have a shared interest in ensuring that CPD serves the community with honor. We invite anyone with information to contact us via email at

community.cleveland@usdoj.gov or by phone at (202) 307-6479.

To the leadership of the city of Cleveland, we appreciate your continuing cooperation. We look forward to working alongside you in the months ahead.

Thank you.